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MotoGP

Tunnel vision...

Defending and diminishing MotoGP World Champion Jorge Lorenzo had all but conceded his title to Casey Stoner after the latter's eighth win of the year in Aragon. However the Australian's mistake in Japan (where Motegi's tunnel allowed this 'ghostly apparition' to follow the Yamaha rider) proved that it might not all be wrapped up so easily by this weekend's event at Phillip Island

Photo by www.yamahamotogp.com





Parting the waves...

A throng of almost 500 riders hammer out of the gloom along the 1.5 mile flat of the 29th Weston Beach Race. The three-hour stint of bravery, madness and machine endurance offered a fantastic split between the full-gas sandy straight and then the rippled bedlam of the dunes. David Knight won the event for the sixth time with the front-runners managing a staggering seven-minute lap in the chaos.

Photo by Ray Archer









A look at the future?

The first invitational Monster Energy Cup occurs this weekend in Las Vegas and will involve this curious motocross-supercross hybrid track curling in and out of the Sam Boyd stadium. Could this be the establishment of a new annual extravaganza that brings the fastest off-road racers together?

By Monster Energy/Feld



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MotoGP

GRAND PRIX OF JAPAN

MOTEGI · OCTOBER 2nd

MotoGP winner: Dani Pedrosa, Honda

Moto2 winner: Andrea Iannone, Suter

125cc winner: Johann Zarco, Derbi





PEDROSA FAR-OUT IN FAR EAST

By Matthew Roberts


Photos by Monster Energy/Milagro, www.yamahamotogp.com,
Honda Pro Images, Ducati Corse Press

Can it get any worse? Rossi's season hits a new low as his trip to Japan and two days of work at Motegi washed out in the first seconds of this fifteenth round. Fingers were loosely pointed.



There was a time when a first-lap crash from Valentino Rossi would have been the biggest talking point of any Grand Prix weekend but the fact his latest misdemeanour at Motegi last Sunday has been buried under the debris of the post-race aftermath says as much about the ignominy of his first season with Ducati as it does about the drama of a remarkably eventful Grand Prix of Japan.

Of the eighteen riders who started the race, with Karel Abraham not even making the grid due to concussion, only thirteen made it to the chequered flag and of those riders only seven avoided an off-track excursion of some kind, be it through the pit-lane or across the gravel. It was an exciting one to watch from pit-lane and the drama continued long into the night as explanations were given and fingers pointed in the riders' post-race debriefs, with Rossi



Rossi missed the points for the first time this season and up until race-day was the only rider to have filled in his scorecard at each round

citing a mistake from Jorge Lorenzo as the reason for his first 'DNF' of the year: "Lorenzo went onto the grass slightly in Turn 1, and in the next turn he moved suddenly to get his trajectory right," explained Rossi. "He didn't see me because I was slightly behind. When he touched me, it pushed me into [Ben] Spies, who touched my front brake lever. It was normal racing contact, but I was in the wrong place at the wrong time."

Spies initially shrugged off his disappointment at being shoved off track by Rossi in the same incident and said nobody was to blame for what was a racing incident, although he later suggested otherwise on a social networking site. Marco Simoncelli claimed he made his jump-start because he saw Andrea Dovizioso move out of the corner of his eye whilst Dovizioso, at least, was able to hold his hands up. "It was my mistake, that's it," the Italian ruefully ad-



Pedrosa celebrated his first MotoGP victory at Motegi and added the achievement to wins taken on 125 and 250cc machinery

mitted, reflecting on the missed opportunity to take his first ever dry-weather win. The domino effect of Dovizioso's impetuosity also caught out Cal Crutchlow - "I knew I'd jumped the start because directly in front of me was Simoncelli and I just let the clutch out when I saw him move," said the

Brit - whilst Nicky Hayden admitted he had a lucky escape.

"Everybody flinched, and I almost got baited into jumping," said the American, who also claimed he too was touched by Rossi and forced wide in turn one.

Álvaro Bautista also blamed a poor start on



Marquez out front, both in the race and the championship. After his prolonged pursuit of Stefan Bradl for the top spot in the Moto2 standings Marc Marquez finally pulled ahead after his tenth podium of the season. The Spaniard is on for a remarkable back-to-back set of titles after owning the 125cc class in '10.



At 44 years of age Shinichi Itoh signed off a road racing career in what was a poignant gesture for his country and community. He made his debut in 1988 and was the first GP rider ever to be clocked at more than 200mph (qualifying for the German GP at Hockenheim in 1993)



Glum looks for Eliás who seems to be on his way out of MotoGP again. The 2010 Moto2 champion had won at Motegi in both the Moto2 class and 250cc, it just doesn't seem to be happening for the talented Spaniard

the confusion at the lights although he was one of several riders later apologising to his team, including the debutante Damian Cudlin, after crashing when ambition got the better of him in the latter stages of in the race. However, perhaps the man with the most to reflect on was Casey Stoner, who escaped with

a podium finish and saw his title advantage cut by just four points despite running off track and dropping back to seventh place when his brakes failed after hitting a bump. Up to that point Stoner was odds-on for an almost certain win over Dani Pedrosa and Jorge Lorenzo that would have extended his lead to



Honda's impressive museum at Motegi was honourably opened to Yamaha Grand Prix machinery over the weekend as the companies paid recognition to the Iwata firm's 50th birthday



53 points and left him needing simply to finish ahead of Lorenzo in order to seal the title at Phillip Island next Sunday.
Now his best bet is to take victory and hope for the Spaniard not to make the podium in order to claim the title at his home Grand Prix on his 26th birthday.



Assured of factory status for 2012
Simoncelli rode well to fourth for
what was only his second ever top
five finish at Motegi





Stoner fought back to the podium for some effective damage limitation. The Aussie won his first title in 2007 in Japan and although his third position perhaps could have been better this result still sets-up his first 'match point' of the year





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Spies gets a lift. Yamaha were running their fetching 50th anniversary livery once more although the American was not able to repeat his Assen victory in the 'new clothes' after being a victim of the Rossi incident. Spies also ran off the track in his Motegi debut in 2010.



SAFE AND SOUND

By Matthew Roberts

After all the controversy and some frankly scandalous headlines about radiation fears in the Spanish and Italian press (the latter were represented at Motegi by just one journalist), not to mention certain members of riders' entourages walking around the paddock with geiger meters, it was fitting that the only thing anybody wanted to talk about after the Grand Prix of Japan was the racing.

The Japanese people have shown so much dignity in the face of disaster and their determination to hold this event despite criticism from some quarters (there is an argument that the money spent on repairs to the track could have been better allocated to those areas still in desperate need of humanitarian aid) was summed up by Hiroshi Aoyama, who himself showed great restraint throughout the 'will they won't they' debacle staged by some of his fellow riders.

"There are a lot of people still suffering and we have had a lot of support from different countries - a lot of people gave us money - but some things we cannot fix by money so if we can bring MotoGP here we can bring positive energy, a positive mentality," he told the BBC. "This means a lot for the Japanese people."

Needless to say the radiation levels at the circuit were negligible, registering much higher on the aeroplanes on the way over. Although

that didn't stop the Italian dailies coming up with speculative and inappropriate headlines, for example, one described the researchers employed by IRTA to give the teams daily updates on radiation levels as 'Ghostbusters'. It is a sorry chapter in the story of the 2011 season and one that personally I am glad to see the back of.

I am catching up with my blog a little later than usual this week, which is largely down to the mild narcolepsy that seems to come with jet-lag. I have been suffering more than I can ever remember before, despite my best and noble attempts to 'get onto UK time' by heading for a karaoke bar last Sunday night, along with much of the rest of the paddock - riders included.

In fact, no fewer than four of the eleven who suffered some kind of mishap in the race were there to sing away their blues at the now notorious 'Cage' bar in central Narita. Before heading down there I asked people on Twitter to come up with some song requests for the riders, which threw up some pretty funny suggestions, my favourite being Jorge Lorenzo to sing "Tie Me Kangaroo Down." If you think you can do better tweet your suggestions to @ontrackoffroad - the best one gets a copy of my Lorenzo photo book: The New King of MotoGP. The title might be out of date by the time you get it but I can assure you the contents are timeless!!



CLASSIFICATION & WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

MotoGP RESULT

Riders

1	Dani Pedrosa, SPA	Honda
2	Jorge Lorenzo, SPA	Yamaha
3	Casey Stoner, AUS	Honda
4	Marco Simoncelli, ITA	Honda
5	Andrea Dovizioso, ITA	Honda

MotoGP CHAMPIONSHIP STANDINGS (AFTER 15 OF 18 ROUNDS)

Riders	Points
1 Casey Stoner	300
2 Jorge Lorenzo	260
3 Andrea Dovizioso	196
4 Dani Pedrosa	195
5 Ben Spies	156



Moto2 RESULT

Riders

1	Andrea Iannone, ITA	Suter
2	Marc Marquez, SPA	Suter
3	Thomas Luthi, SUI	Suter
4	Stefan Bradl, GER	Kalex
5	Simone Corsi, GER	FTR

Moto2 CHAMPIONSHIP STANDINGS (AFTER 14 OF 17 ROUNDS)

Riders	Points
1 Marc Marquez	235
2 Stefan Bradl	234
3 Andrea Iannone	157
4 Alex De Angelis	132
5 Simone Corsi	126

125cc RESULT

Riders

1	Johann Zarco, FRA	Derbi
2	Nico Terol, SPA	Aprilia
3	Hector Faubel, SPA	Aprilia
4	Maverick Viñales, SPA	Aprilia
5	Sandro Cortese, GER	Aprilia

125cc CHAMPIONSHIP STANDINGS (AFTER 14 OF 17 ROUNDS)

Riders	Points
1 Nico Terol	261
2 Johann Zarco	230
3 Maverick Viñales	190
4 Sandro Cortese	180
5 Jonas Folger	140



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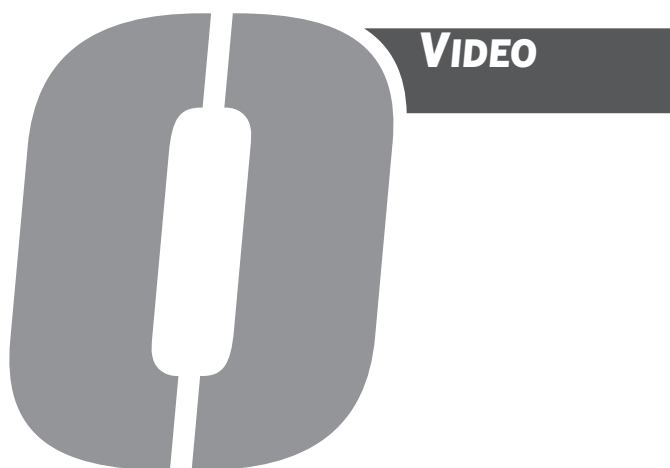
BUY LORENZO'S BIKE - TWO CAREFUL OWNERS!

If you are a regular reader of OTOR then you may remember that in a couple of weeks time I will be riding all the way from the Ace Cafe in London to Valencia for the final round of the MotoGP season in aid of Riders for Health, alongside the actor Danny John-Jules (who plays The Cat in Red Dwarf) and Steve Keys (owner of the first UK Yamaha dealership).

Danny and Steve will both be riding pink Yamaha R1s whilst I will have the pleasure of riding the unique Jorge Lorenzo liveried R1 that the current MotoGP World Champion rode around the Isle of Man TT circuit last year. Well I am delighted to announce that we are now going to auction the bike off at Motorcycle Live show at the NEC (Birmingham, UK) on November 20th.

As well as providing much needed funds to an amazing charity this is your chance to own a piece of two-wheel history. As an added bonus Bridgestone will supply a brand new set of tyres for the bike and Carole Nash has donated a voucher worth £500 for the new owner.

For more information on Motorcycle Live visit www.motorcyclelive.com and to read more about our trip, buy a t-shirt or simply donate please visit www.motoventures.co.uk



SUPER SIC STRETCHES HIS LEGS

Marco Simoncelli finally got to throw his sizeable frame over that of the Honda RC213V at Motegi last Monday, the Italian being rewarded with a one-day test after confirming in Japan that he would be staying with HRC in San Carlo Honda Gresini colours next season. After struggling with the aerodynamics and in particular fuel consumption of the current 800cc machines, Simoncelli will be one of the main beneficiaries of the change to 1000cc engines in 2012 and is already an outsider to challenge for the title on what is likely to be the best bike on the grid.

"It was a fantastic experience riding the RC213V, and I'd like to thank HRC for giving me this opportunity," said the 24-year-old, before heading off to Boracay Island in the Philippines for a short break. "I did 50 laps

and I felt confident on the bike immediately, setting times like those with the RC212V. I enjoyed myself, and the bike is as fun to ride as I expected: it even wheelies in fifth and sixth gear. At the end of the day I even gave some feedback, and some suggestions that I hope will help with development."

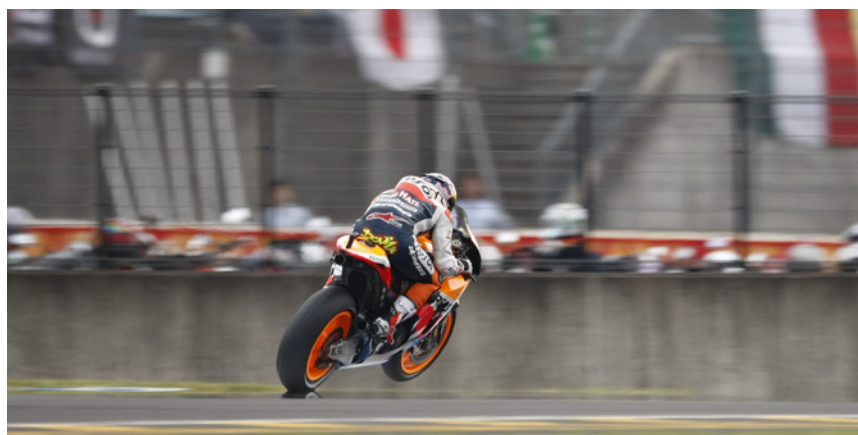


WHAT NOW FOR DOVI?

Simoncelli's new contract with HRC seemingly leaves Andrea Dovizioso out in the cold, possibly bringing the curtain down on ten Grand Prix seasons with Honda. Although Lucio Cecchinello is hopeful of signing his compatriot to ride a privateer RC213V, the former 125cc World Champion is understood to be considering a change of scenery, with an offer from Tech3 Yamaha on the table.

A sticking point on the Tech3 deal is that Poncharal is only offering a single season, having already confirmed Bradley Smith as part of his MotoGP plans for 2013 and 2014. Smith has signed with the French outfit for one more year in Moto2 before moving up, meaning any

new acquisition for 2012 would have to compete with Cal Crutchlow for the vacant ride alongside the 20-year-old Brit. Poncharal told the BBC that he is also negotiating with Álvaro Bautista and is considering Eugene Laverty as an alternative to the pair should he fail to reach a deal with either.



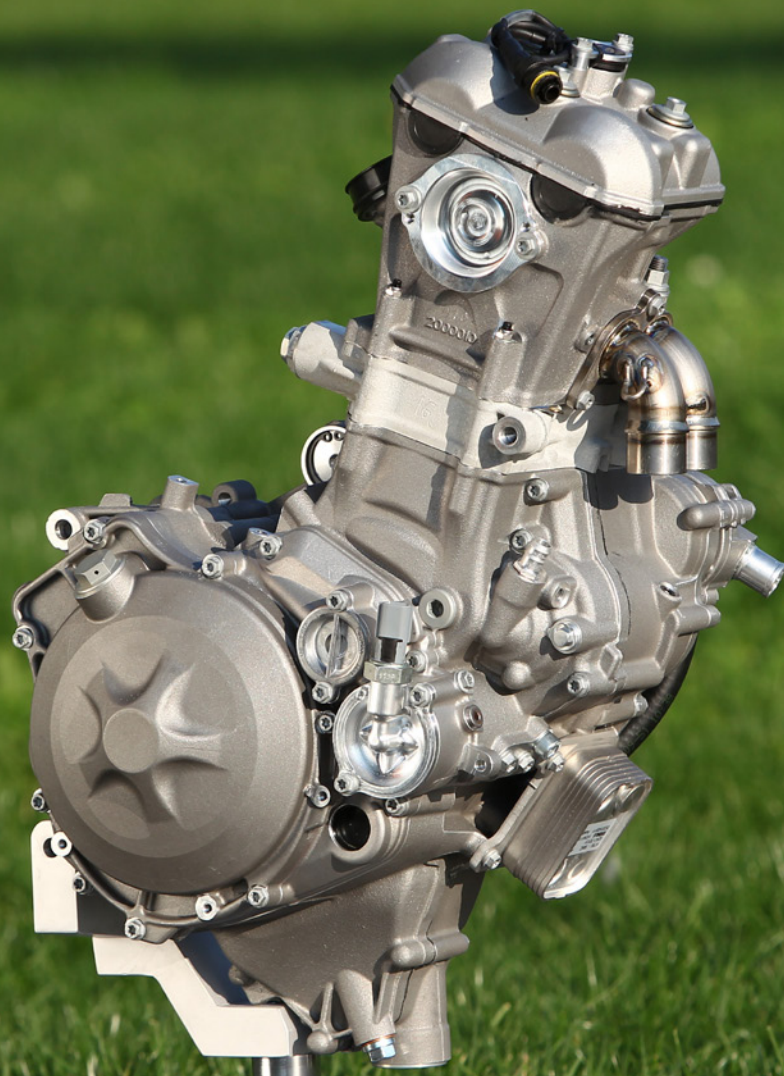
KTM UNVEILS MOTO3 AT RED BULL'S HANGAR 7

KTM brought together the press and both of their motocross world champions, Tony Cairoli and Ken Roczen, in an event at Red Bull's Hangar 7 in Salzburg that not only celebrated some of their racing achievements in 2011 but also gave an audience to CEO Stefan Pierer to unveil the single cylinder four-stroke 25kg 250cc engine that will run in the new Moto3 class in 2012.

Pierer allegedly explained that the engine has been built in-house and the chance to go road racing again was based on two

decisions: firstly to bring KTM further into the eastern market and secondly to show off the prowess of the Austrian's four-stroke technology. KTM will run their Moto3 project from the factory in Mattighofen and will produce a tubular frame chassis but are apparently also working with Kalex on another version. The bike is already making tests in Spain. Hangar 7, the magnificently constructed building that houses a bar, restaurant as well as the Flying Bulls squadron, was an apt setting for the latest stage of KTM's racing 're-birth'.





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SUPERSPORT SUPERSTAR...

By Matthew Roberts

There's a quote from Chaz Davies in Rick Broadbent's entertaining compendium of tales from behind the scenes of MotoGP, called 'Ring Of Fire', that goes like this: 'I remember Matt with his head in his hands saying Dorna weren't paying him enough. We were in the same position. It was all shit. I wasn't getting paid a penny. It was basically me and my dad. There were hire cars and hotels and it was easy to burn £1,500 a weekend. I got a grant from the Welsh Sports Council, but you don't finish the season with any money unless you get lucky on a couple of sponsors.'

Chaz was talking about his early days in the 125cc and 250cc World Championships, when we first met. I was a young journalist – in it for the experience rather than money, in a similar boat to any rider who wasn't from an Italian or Spanish background – and I was lucky enough to become friends with him and his partner in crime, a jug-eared smiler called Casey Stoner. The pair would bunk together in the back of a white trailer, usually parked a couple of hundred metres away from the paddock whilst their ever supportive parents shared the motorhome, and I would head up to hang out with them for an hour or so on a daily basis.

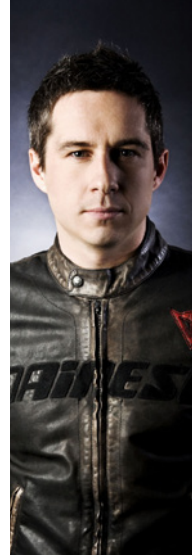
On the track they both showed huge ability but it was always Stoner who caught the eye, a rough diamond with blistering raw pace that was championed throughout the paddock by Alberto Puig. The wily Spaniard had also recognised the talent of Davies, having picked the pair up from the British Championship to race in Spain as part of the Telefonica Movistar project that unearthed Dani Pedrosa, but the younger of the two would always play second

fiddle to Stoner, who was deservedly given semi-factory machinery from the start.

Forced to battle for points on antiquated bikes in private teams that had financial liquidity, as opposed to rider development, at the top of their list of priorities, Davies' occasionally herculean efforts often went unnoticed. His confidence took as much of a battering as his bank account and finally he slipped quietly out of the back door of the Grand Prix paddock altogether. Five years on, his career has gone from resurrection in AMA to redemption in World Supersport.

Along the way he has stepped out of the shadow of a genius in Stoner and found his own path. The humility and self-deprecation that marks him out as a fantastic person – and at one time perhaps held him back as a rider – remains but he has developed a habit for winning and the confidence to look at a grid of riders and know deep down that none of them are good enough to shine his boots.

With a competitive package underneath him and a supportive team around him, Chaz has been aggressive and consistent from the first race, showing superior set-up skills to his rivals and riding with intelligence and maturity. He admitted to 'losing it' with his team after his first chance to wrap up the title at Imola went up in a puff of smoke, a stark contrast to the resignation that would inevitably follow a multitude of mechanical breakdowns during those early Grand Prix days. A decade may have passed since then but at the age of just twenty-four Chaz Davies is finally the master of his own future.



Clement Desalle

Team Rockstar Energy

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PH: Ray Archer

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THE INDIVIDUAL...

WHY THERE IS NO OTHER MOTORCYCLE RACER QUITE LIKE CHRISTOPHE POURCEL

Words by Adam Wheeler, Photos by Ray Archer

I point out to Christophe Pourcel that the last time I interviewed him we needed a translator. He laughs. Can't remember him doing that before.

Back at the tail-end of 2006 and into 2007 Pourcel was MX2 World Champion, had won the Phoenix Lites Supercross in what was just his second AMA stadium appearance, was eighteen years of age and clearly impatient to start an American adventure that would eventually lead to two AMA Supercross titles and narrowly miss out on an MX crown.

He seemed pretty bored having to remain in Europe during 2007 and especially with all the Jean-Michel Bayle comparisons that had been floating around. Maybe it was teenage arrogance or perhaps an indifference to Grands Prix but as a consequence when Pourcel suffered a serious injury with his lower back at the Grand Prix of Northern Ireland he rapidly dropped off the radar. Tony Cairoli was MX2 champion for the second time and the French-

man would convalesce for eight months, before his spectacular re-emergence in the United States with the decorated pro Circuit Kawasaki set-up and begin a love-hate relationship with the American scene.

Pourcel is great for motocross.

We are not only talking about an immense talent but an individual character unlike any other in the paddock. On the bike Pourcel does things his own way. If the motorcycle is right (and it seems that it must be a Kawasaki, having ridden 'green' all his career apart from an aborted and controversial attempt to begin the 2011 AMA Nationals with Motoconcepts Yamaha) then the guy can literally fly.

He takes lines nobody else dares and makes them work. He is another in the short line of winners at the highest level to make a physical, complicated and technical sport look like a bicycle ride through a local park.

On the tattoo: “it was something I wanted but man it hurt to do. I was almost crying with pain. It is not finished yet.”

When the engine has stopped Pourcel still walks his own path. Small idiosyncrasies like a flippant approach to team corporate wear, the use of a chest protector over his race jersey (hiding all those sponsor logos), and a propensity to winding people up (especially figures of authority) mean that he is not the easiest of riders to work with but all this certainly creates a polemic aura.

As if to embellish the fact he sports a tattoo the length of his torso stating: ‘I am whatever I want to be.’

Part of the distrust or aloofness connected with Pourcel maybe extends from the principles he applied to his life after the partial paralysis suffered in '07. His absence from the 2011 Supercross campaign because he couldn't find the deal he wanted was an extreme (and some would say costly) example of the priorities he puts on his career. The operation scars are a daily reminder of that accident and even after our interview he tells me that he struggles to stay standing up in one place for too long. He says he even has to move about while brushing his teeth. A little of this discomfort is evident when he arrives a week later at the Grand Prix in Italy at the Monster Energy Rig to pose for photos with Ray Archer. It is a ten-minute session but it is hard to tell whether his lack of patience in front of the lights is a physical thing or awkwardness with the situation and attention. Pourcel has been the recipient of praise and platitudes for most of his life. Even his older brother and new team-mate for 2012 Sebastien admitted that his sibling was better than him when he made his Grand Prix

breakthrough several year prior.

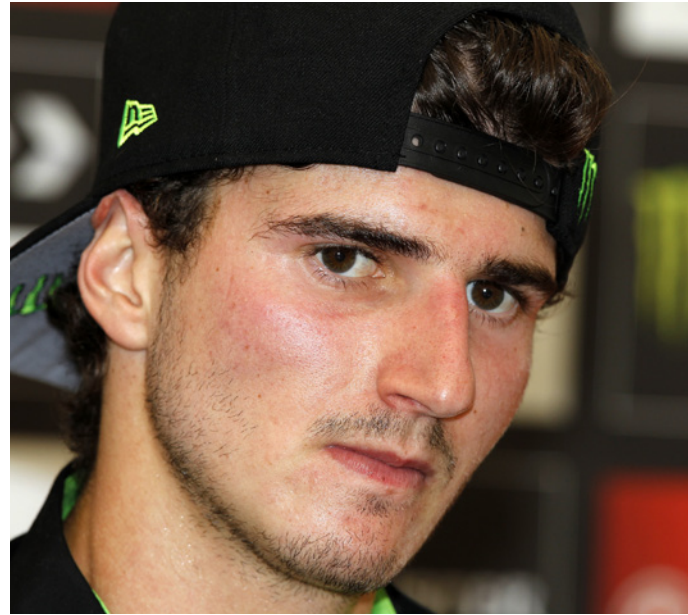
Even though he is still somewhat guarded/shy, talking with Christophe is an easier feat these days. The language helps. His English was minimal in his world championship pomp and now he has a firm grasp of the tongue with a strange accent that is heavy on the American but whips back to French for certain words and sounds. He also appears more approachable.

On his well-hyped Grand Prix return at Germany this year (round nine of the series and after Ben Townley had vacated the CLS Kawasaki awning leaving the KX450-F idle) he wanted to slip under the radar and said in a press conference that his first GP appearances in more than three years would be just to get ready for a return to the U.S. That first outing on a factory bike at Teutschenthal was disappointingly mild and with two DNFs it is hard to imagine his career being at a lower point. Pourcel then provided Kawasaki with some fantastic PR for their 2012 KX – the same bike that Ryan Villopoto (and the one that Pourcel original wanted but was not flavour of the month with the works team in the U.S.) would take to the AMA MX 450 championship – by riding a production model to three moto victories from the last six. It was a decent comeback and in recognition of the fact that he had found a new home in the French CLS crew and the support of owner Jean-Jacques Luisetti Pourcel seemed to fall in favour with the Grand Prix scene again.

It was even a surprise to hear him say his career highlight was his MX2 title in a video interview with www.mx-life.tv that you can view on these pages...







To start again as a Grand Prix rider was that hard to do with all the attention or was it pretty cool that people here still remember your potential?

Um...I think Europe has been good for me and all the people know me and are nice with me. I like it here. I have a lot more friends here than I do there, in the U.S.

You made a Grand Prix return in Germany. It didn't really go to plan but how was it dealing with it all?

Um, yeah, it was a good to comeback in Germany but it was not the bike I wanted. It was another Kawi, nothing like the one I have in Florida and what I've been training with for four years now. It had a load of factory stuff and it wasn't good for my style. I think the bike is good but the way it was for me...wasn't. So it was good to go there and find that out. After that weekend I called the boss and said 'we gotta do it my way. You guys gotta call Pro Circuit and make it happen because they know what I want'.

Are you quite specific with your set-up?

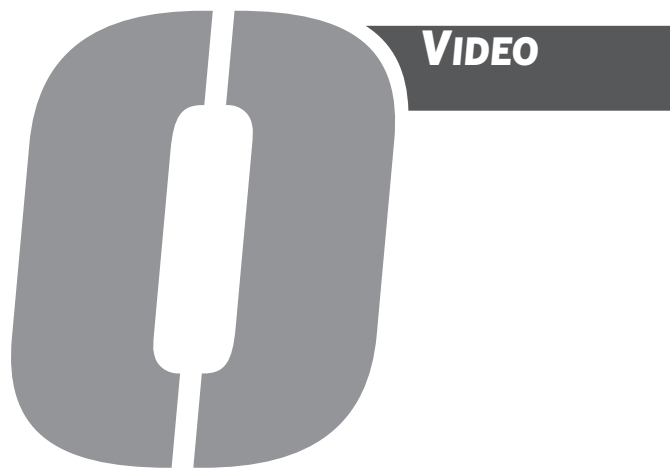
Yeah, we were riding with the stock bike and stock suspension. I have a kinda soft setting. The shock is pretty stiff but the fork is soft. The bike can turn really good and that is the way I usually do it.

Have you changed a lot as a rider since the days on the 250? The way you are on the bike...?

(Big pause) I think the 250 is not the same thing. For the 250 it was pretty easy to set up the bike but with the 450 you have the right setting for your style, otherwise it is too much.

Did working with Pro Circuit in the U.S. help you to learn more about what you want from a motorcycle?

Um, not really. A lot of stuff with suspension I worked out in Europe before and when I went there I knew what I wanted. I was talking to Bones [PC suspension guru] and every time we tried something I would give my feedback and he would do his thing. Here it is more of a situation where I gotta do it all, and more in the way I want to, instead of someone telling me what to run.



Thinking back to your Pro Circuit days, were those the best of your career so far?

It was Pro Circuit and Kawi all the way for me and it was really good. They gave me the best stuff ever and I won those two championships for them. That's why I wanted to stay with Kawi and I talked to Mitch about this deal because I think it is the best bike ever.

How is relationship now with Kawasaki and Mitch?

I don't talk to the manager of the factory Kawi team. They haven't been nice to me and don't want me in the team. The Japanese want me but if some guy in the factory team says I am not good then you cannot make it happen. That side is not good but with Mitch it is all good. He is helping me out and has been there all the time.

What happened with the team? What happened with Mitch? Why miss a year?

I was working with an agent and the guy was

supposed to be talking to other people to find me a ride and that's why I paid those guys. I was kinda waiting for Kawi to make something happen. I wanted to stay with them and on the bike I like. With Mitch we couldn't do anything because he doesn't have a 450 team. The Manager from Kawi didn't want me at all so he didn't make me an offer and he said to the press that I wanted a lot of money when I didn't even get an offer, not even ten bucks.

Because of your speed, results and profile it must have been hard on you not to find the right ride. It seemed like a crazy situation...

I was trying to find something but my agent didn't find anything so I was talking to Yamaha and I tried the Honda. The Honda was pretty good but the bike from Geico had a setting from Metcalfe or whatever and I didn't like it or feel comfortable at all. I tried the Yamaha and it was pretty good from the first day. So I went with that one but when I pushed with it I ended up struggling like crazy. It was moving too much.



On the bike Pourcel does things his own way...he takes lines nobody else dares and makes them work



So through that episode you learned about who you can trust...

Um, a little bit. That is why I am here because at CLS I am working with Jean-Jacques who is a friend. That is why I came back, for my Dad too. They are the two guys who made it happen. I am not working with any agents right now, I am kinda by myself. Mitch is helping me and a few guys that I know. Since my accident I know who is going to help me or not. When you are in your bed and nobody comes to see you then you know what it is about.

Do you care what people think about you?

Um. I like the people who hate me, and I like the people that like me. So...

What about the view that you are anti-establishment, that you don't play corporate game. Do you think this is bullshit or do you not care?

What do you mean?

Like the chest protector that covers up the sponsors and not wearing team gear around at the races...

I think I do my job and it is good to be whoever you are. People can learn from you a little bit more if you are true and not fake. I think it is way better for people to see that.

After the Motoconcepts episode it was easy for people to think or write badly about you... that you are not easy to work with. Do you think there are people in the AMA that have bad opinion of you?

It doesn't matter to me. I go there to ride and I do it for myself and the entourage I have.

What has been your motivation over the last six months?

Trying to get 'my bike' back, again. The one I have at my home in Florida is so good. We have made a lot of changes and what I have now is good again. It takes a little while to get the decent set-up and then train with that.

Is MX1 what you expected? Did you follow the GPs in the US...?

Not really because we were pretty busy there but I knew what was going on in Europe. I know that these guys go fast and there is no doubt about it. There are like ten guys who can win a moto so it is more interesting. You never know who is going to be at the front so you have to go for the win all the time.

Do you have more of a life here? More socialising and not just about the bike...?

Where I live in the U.S. it is also fine, it's good. Normally I only like to be with a couple of friends and my parents, that's about it. I love it there because the weather is good and my track and house is great. You really appreciate having a track next to your house. I like being here but the weather is not the best!

Do you still have any problems with the injury from 2007?

Staying standing up is not easy, after some minutes it feels like my back is on fire because it is all locked up. I can't really run but something that involves movement like cycling is OK.

Can you afford to stop racing? Have you done enough?

Right now I can say 'yeah' I could step away. Since my accident I don't miss riding. When I do ride I enjoy it but I could not ride for a year and it is fine for me.

What motivates you? What drives you?

Right now the team is a challenge for me and little things like have the Pro Circuit bike and the fact that Kawi haven't won a race on a 450 for quite a long time. It is a new goal and also I haven't done anything on a 450 yet in MX1. I am enjoying myself right now. My bike is good and the guys around me also but if I go somewhere else like I did last time then I had better stop racing. I mean I got a good house, got some money and won some championships. Life is about more than racing.

OCTOBER'S MOVERS AND SHAKERS

October seems to be the month of 'confirmation' with well-known news in the motocross grand prix paddock being made official.

First-up is the announcement that the factory Rockstar Suzuki team have employed Tanel Leok as a second rider to Clement Desalle. The Estonian previously steered a factory RM-Z in 2004 after being given the injured Joel Smets' motorcycle half way through a maiden MX1 term in which he caught the eye on a RM250 two-stroke. Leok's fifth employment in as many years (works Kawasaki, De Carli Yamaha, LS Honda, and in 2011, TM) means – incredibly – that Sylvain Geboers team will be field a non-Belgian rider on a permanent basis for the first time since 2003 having used Kevin Strijbos, Smets, Ken De Dycker, Desalle and Steve Ramon in that time. Ramon ends a six-year association with the Belgian outfit and the veteran and former world champion's future in the sport is not yet known as he recovers from the spinal trauma suffered in qualification for the Grand Prix of Limburg in July.

"I would like to convey our thanks to Steve Ramon," said Geboers in the official statement. "Steve won our last title in 2007 and all of us at Suzuki wish him a full recovery from his injury and we are grateful for his commitment, results and professionalism in his time with us."

The delay with the declaration of the company's racing plans was expected until the end of the summer with Suzuki also yet to voice their designs on MotoGP or World Superbike.

Leok is known as a hard and determined rider but has struggled for consistency. He managed to put the unfancied TM in the winner's circle in 2011 and holds the distinction of being one of only two current riders (De Dycker the

other) to have claimed GP podiums with three different brands.

Hot on the heels of this press release came the expected news that CLS Kawasaki have indeed splintered into two factions with Dutchman Adri Van Beers now overseeing the MX2 effort and the MX1 Kawasaki arm of the French team becoming a Pourcel family affair. It means that Kawasaki could now have mini power struggles on both sides of the Atlantic with Pro Circuit extending their technical expertise into MX1/450 which brings them into conflict with the official U.S. racing team (that carries MX/SX champion Ryan Villopoto) and the works Kawasaki Racing Team in the GP paddock (with Paulin and Boog).

The first victim of these 'battle lines' was Villopoto's team manager Mike Fisher who resigned last week.

Back in Europe and the prospect of Christophe Pourcel mounting a full tilt at the MX1 crown is mouth-watering and will add another dimension to the Cairoli-Desalle-Frossard-Bobryshev axis that pushed to the forefront of the class in 2011. If his brother Sebastien can regain some of his GP and MX of Nations winning form from 2008 then it will be a 'green' year (with hopefully not too many headaches for the Kawasaki top-brass).



MONSTER ENERGY GIRL SEARCH

Regular readers might have noticed the presence of one or two Monster Energy girls in these pages over the last few months. We make no apologies for such photographic fodder around the race paddocks of the world but it seems those keen chaps working under the green 'M' are salivating on expansion of their line-up of ladies and have just launched the Monster Girl Search for 2012.

Basically if you are, or know anyone, hot enough to make the grade then Monster are

willing to take a look and the best 12 girls voted for online will earn a role on the team travelling the world and to events all over. Judgement closes at the end of October and the final selection will be decided just in time for the 2012 calendar shoot. At the very least the scheme is a great idea to spend ten minutes online looking at girls.

For more info click on this website link: www.monstergirlsearch.com.



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MOVING THE FUTURE AROUND

By Adam Wheeler

The days after the meeting of the FIM Grand Prix commission on October 18th should reveal just how 'provisional' the 2012 FIM Motocross World Championship calendar actually was. The schedule involved some notable shifts when it was published two months ago including elongation, the addition of an extra date and placement of the Motocross of Nations amongst the Grand Prix programme (between rounds fourteen and fifteen of sixteen) instead of filling a role as the traditional 'curtain-closer'.

While the Nations itself is a monolith of a meeting the fact that it could interrupt the world championship with its current slot might have implications, particularly after this season's campaign in which the issue of factory riders undertaking 'non-essential' non-GP races came even harder under the spotlight. The works Honda World Motocross team have already publically stated that they would be reviewing the commitment of their riders away from the MX1 class, which, at a more extreme example, could significantly weaken the Russian and Portuguese entries at the '12 MXoN at Lommel in Belgium (a venue where Evgeny Bobryshev and Rui Goncalves have proved to be pretty handy in the past).

The FIM and Youthstream might also want to be aware of the statistic that since 2006 every MX1 world championship title chase has been decided in the final two rounds. 2007 and 2008 were wrapped at the last race while Tony Cairoli has made sure of the job at the penultimate Grands Prix of 2009 (Holland), '10 (Brazil) and '11 (Germany).

At any rate the present proposal of fixtures will also certainly involve a shift, with Fermo having already been confirmed as the site of the Grand Prix of Italy and Youthstream declaring that the visit to southern Europe will occur earlier in the championship to avoid the roasting 30+ degrees witnessed on the Adriatic coast last month. The Italian stop was originally pencilled in as the last race for the third year in a row on October 14th and if it slides into a new spot in May or April then that leaves Sevlievo, Bulgaria making the flip from season-opener to season-closer in the space of one year.

Riders, teams and workers enjoyed a 2011 of good weather, in fact, only Glen Helen in California (bizarrely) sticks out as the one where the climate unexpectedly turned for the worse. It seems highly likely that Valkenswaard in Holland will still open 2012 for what will be a busy meeting but if it keeps the April 8th slot then the metrological conditions enter the realms of lottery. It is set to take place two weeks earlier than in 2011 where it was the second round of fifteen.

This year at Valkenswaard I saw the hottest weather at a Dutch motocross grand prix event... but then I have also been to the site close to Eindhoven for a GP when snow has drifted down from the skies. The displacement of Fermo from a date too far out of the summer zone is a risk with the topography of Italy in that region meaning a wet event will see us all slide down the steep, small hill. Some hot rumours indicate that in addition to Mexico and Brazil another non-European Grand Prix will occur and of course Thailand enters the frame from 2013. Provisional indeed...



MX

RHL BEACH RACE

WESTON-SUPER-MARE • OCTOBER 8-9th

Solo winner: David Knight, KTM

Quad winner: Paul Winrow



FUN DAY AT THE BEACH

By Adam Wheeler, photos by Ray Archer and Nuno Laranjeira



It was an English King, Canute, who according to legend tried to order back the sea but it was a 'Knight' who managed to repel what the beachfront at Weston-Super-Mare had to offer.

The former World and British Enduro Champion was one of almost 500 entrants at the 29th RHL Beach Race and engaged in a fantastic race with ex-motocross Grand Prix star Tom Church for the better part of the exhausting three hour duration. The Weston is one of those excellent events where an optimistic amateur can share track space with the consummate pros. One person's goal of a fastest lap is another's push for survival while wearing an inflatable sheep on their head.

The British weather was reliable as ever and although a meek crowd saw Paul Winrow take the Quad crown on Saturday the long stretches of tide-vacated beach were busy on Sunday as thousands defied wind and spray to shake their heads in disbelief at the carnage on show. Fun, exhausting and a perfect example of how ludicrous motorsport can be, the Weston is a fine example of the eccentricity that goes with liking those two wheeled machines.













ORANGE PEELED:

PAUL MALIN RIDES THE FIM MOTOCROSS WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP WINNING BIKES

Words by Paul Malin, Photos by Ray Archer

In 2011 KTM won the MX1 and MX2 classes of the FIM Motocross World Championship for the second year in a row. Perhaps that much you know. If you follow motocross then you'll also be aware that Tony Cairoli and Max Nagl won almost half of the fifteen MX1 Grands Prix and a third of the thirty motos with the 350SX-F (still the only 350cc motorcycle in MX1). The stats are even more conclusive in MX2 with the fuel-injected 250SX-F. Thanks to Ken Roczen and Jeffrey Herlings the bike owned thirteen from fifteen rounds and a staggering twenty-five from the thirty motos.

What you're unlikely to know is what these potent motorcycles feel like to ride. While the gap between production model and factory racer is famously small in this sport, the tricked-up bikes steered by the likes of Cairoli and Roczen have still been chiselled especially for them. With an aim to find out more and in an attempt to convey some of the sensation of the KTMs turning a wheel in anger we asked for the insight of Paul Malin. The former GP winner turned commentator and TV presenter was one of a gaggle of media who stayed behind after the Motocross of Nations at St Jean D'Angely to be let loose on the 'orange'...

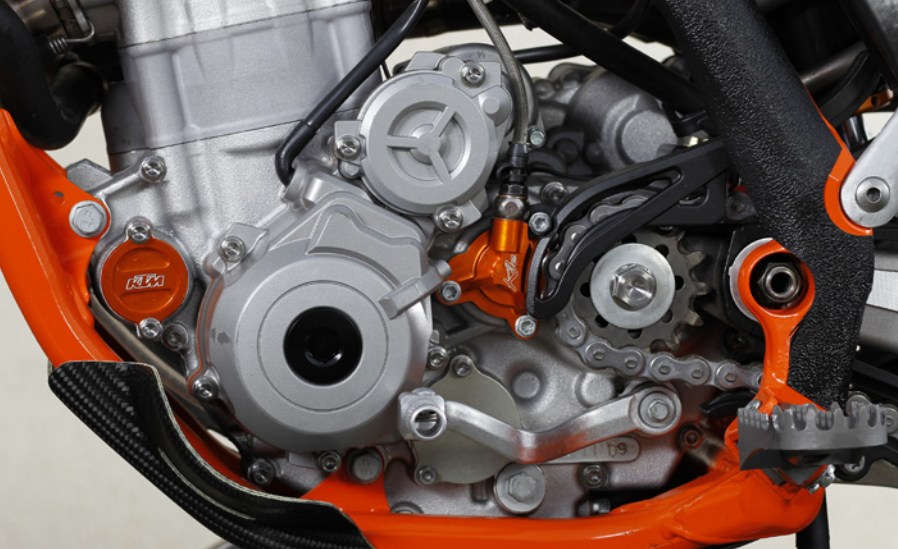
The difference a year can make...

All I can say about this 350SX-F is WOW! Compared to last year's model which was very

smooth and easy to ride this is something different altogether, much stronger. Cairoli's 2010 bike felt very much in between a 250 and 450, and placed alongside the rocket ship that was Max Nagl's 450 of 2010, was the perfect bike. His latest mount however sees something much more powerful from the second you open the throttle and a quick word with KTM's technical guru Dirk Gruebel confirms that this year they have made a big step in terms of development of the 350. In fact, Cairoli's bike felt more 450 and the main area of focus seems to be the EFi system. Italian electronics company GET have had a lot of exposure this year but they have a work in progress with KTM. The two companies are working closely together to help develop parts and indeed KTM do use some components but not the whole range it would appear.

On a sixpence?

Of course the bike turns extremely well and handles impeccably; it is probably still the perfect bike in terms of its all-round rideability. It is just that this year the perfect motorcycle became more so with a beefier engine with improved performance. With the new season 'just around the corner' you can bet that KTM are not about to rest on their laurels and more gains are certainly planned to ensure they remain one step ahead at all times.







Roczen's race-bike certainly isn't slow...

The main difference in terms of development from Marvin Musquin's 2010 title-winning machine to Roczen's victorious 2011 250SX-F was the use of the fuel injection system. The result is a stronger, punchier engine right off the bottom with a good set of legs that pulled right the way through the rev range, and it was very fast too. If you watched the Motocross of Nations where Roczen won the MX2 category then you will see that the 450s and 350s were not that much quicker than Kenny's factory 250.

Width isn't everything...

The first thing I noticed about that bike was how narrow his handlebars were - losing one and a half centimetres off each end - giving the impression that you were riding a big-wheeled 85cc. But if it works for him, and it clearly

does, then why not? It does not hinder the turning abilities in any way.

Schooled in supercross...

Suspension-wise, Ken's front forks were softer than Musquin's which was a nice surprise. So there was less of a harsh feeling when hitting the braking bumps and the rear shock was more 'supercrossy' in that it had a fairly quick action to it. Other riders tend to run harder front and rear units that are quite firm and slower by comparison but it seems that Kenny has not drifted too far away from the US setting that took him to that Supercross victory in Las Vegas earlier in the year. Overall the factory 250SX-F was something of a mini rocket ship and highlights how much more work is needed from the competition if they are to seriously challenge for the MX2 title next year.



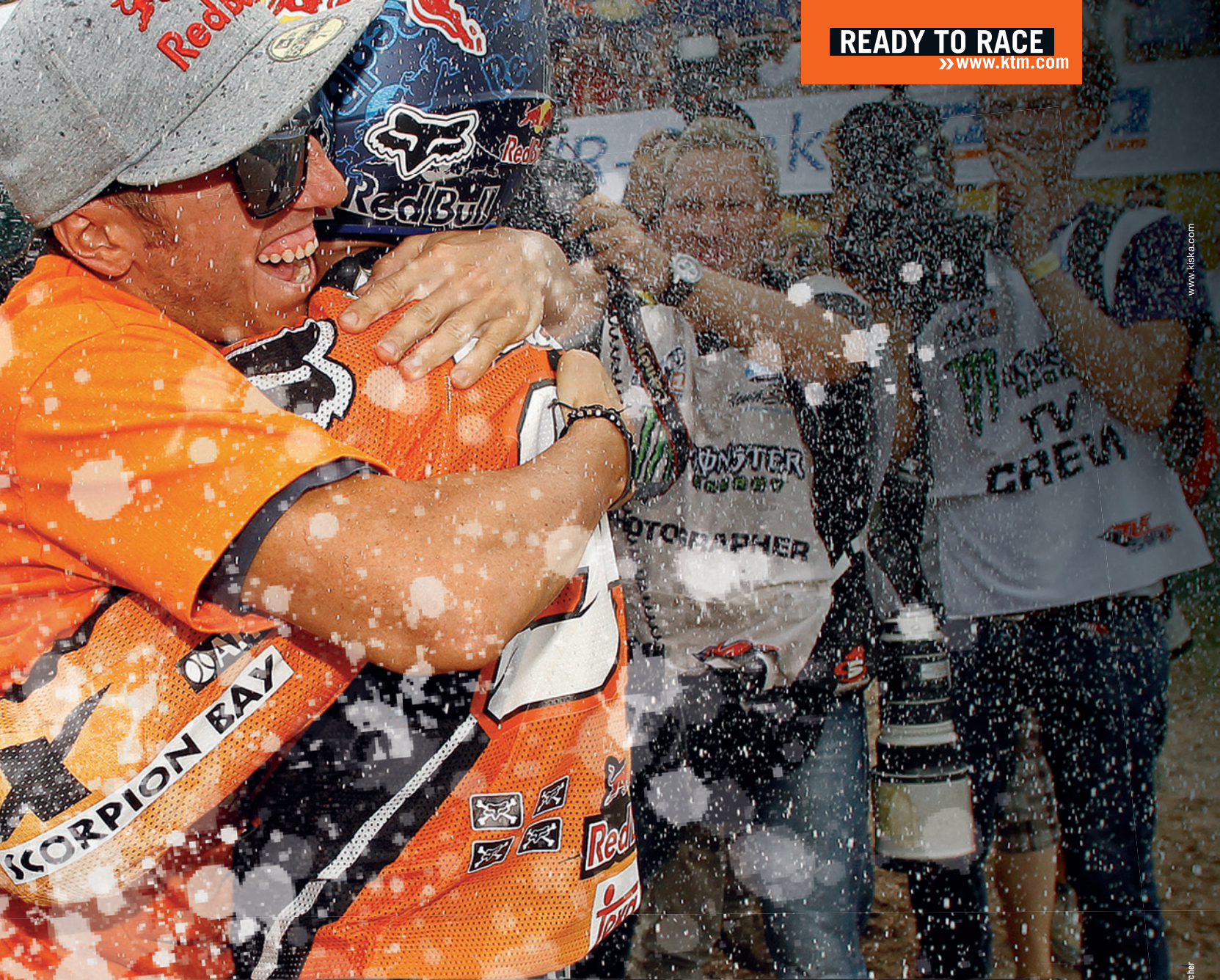


THIS IS HOW CHAMPIONS

KEN ROCZEN & TONY CAIROLI, 2011

One dominates the MX2 class in his debut year with KTM and wins his first world championship title with the KTM 250 SX-F. The other continues the success story of the KTM 350 SX-F in the MX1 class and celebrates his second world championship title with this unique bike. Ken Roczen and Tony Cairoli – victory at the double!

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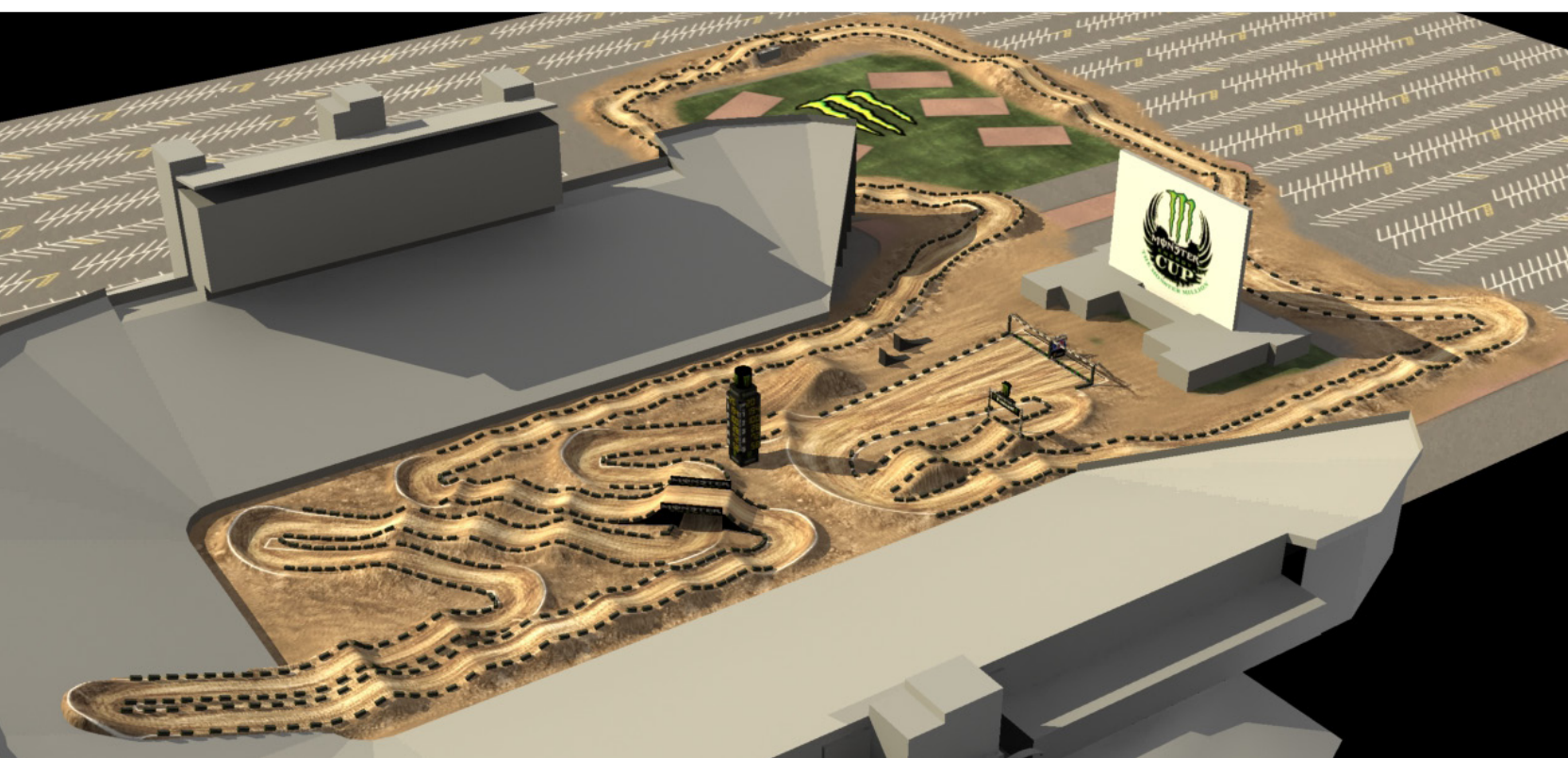
MONSTER ENERGY CUP BREAKS GROUND

Less than a week before the inaugural Monster Energy Cup forges another indispensable annual date in the off-road motorcycle racing calendar, the fruits of Ricky Carmichael and Jeremy McGrath's thoughts and opinions on the race-track were released in art form. To try and separate the million-dollar event from being 'just another' supercross the focus has been on creating a long, varied and challenging course that loops outside the Sam Boyd stadium itself. The circuit is the crux of the meeting and the MX-SX hybrid is – and will be – the key to drawing the participation of the world's best motocrossers and not just the AMA supercross specialists.

The Las Vegas spectacle was also ratified with an open rules package by the AMA last week, which basically means that apart from sound and fuel regulations 'anything goes' in terms of motorcycle specification. With these distinguishing elements the invitational MEC might not only become the sole race of the year in

which riders from both sides of the Atlantic come together under their own banner for the chance of a 100,000 dollar cheque (the cool million is for the rider who wins all three sprints on the night) but the meeting could also be the scene of some new technology otherwise not permitted by AMA or FIM rule-books.

The reaction to the MEC will be interesting to gauge from the stands and OTOR is heading out to cover the action and grab some opinions. It seems so far that the response to the initiative is positive although the timing at the end of the season has deterred a wide selection of talent, noticeably from Europe. It would not be a surprise for this to change in 2012 and with the FIM Motocross World Championship being sponsored by Monster Energy there is little chance of a date-clash in Europe whereas the AMA scene is done and dusted by October with rider contracts usually running to the first of the month.



FISHER OUT, HONDA CHANGES AHEAD

The Monster Energy Kawasaki team won both 450cc titles in 2011 with racer Ryan Villopoto. And only eight days after the Motocross of Nations, Monster Energy Kawasaki team manager Mike Fisher was fired.

No one has come out and said the reason for his dismissal yet but Chad Reed apparently indicated on Twitter that Pro Circuit's Mitch Payton had something to do with it, over the late-pre-season switch from Pro Circuit exhausts on the team bikes to FMF exhausts. While there may be truth in that area, if I had to guess it would be over the fact that only about two months later FMF came out with its own energy drink, causing a strained relationship with Monster Energy over the logo being on the bikes and team hauler. We'll know more soon, though.

And speaking of Chad Reed, it seems likely (although not 100%) that he will be sticking with Honda factory bikes for the 2012 season. He will be on the factory Honda CRF450R, as will his team-mate (if he signs one), alongside the Honda factory team's Trey Canard and Justin Brayton, but that's not all. Reed's old buddy (yes, that's sarcasm) Larry Brooks has teamed up with his former racer Jeremy McGrath to create a new team for 2012, after Brooks was basically fired from his own L&M team in 2011 by James Stewart. The new Brooks/McGrath team will also be factory-Honda-mounted with racer Andrew Short and his teammate. As of now, his team-mate isn't known, but rumours have Josh Grant possibly landing there after spending nearly all of his 2011 season with Team Honda injured. It might be interesting to be a fly on the wall at the test track when Brooks and Reed are there together...



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THROWING THE GAUNTLET...

By Steve Cox

Although many times at the Grands Prix contracts run through a calendar year here in the USA most deals end at the end of September. Why? Easy, because that's when the racing season ends, and especially if you're changing teams, you need all the time you can get in order to sort out your new bike and get on working-terms with your new team.

That being said most of the big-name racers who are looking to make a change for 2012 are falling into place now that it's October. At the very end of September came word that Ryan Dungey would be officially moving to the Red Bull KTM team. And on October 8th, one week before the Monster Energy Cup, KTM held an introduction for Dungey at their corporate headquarters in Murrieta, California.

There, Dungey fielded questions about his switch for the first time publicly and he (predictably) had a lot of positive things to say about the KTM 450 SX/F, including praising the steel frame (as opposed to the aluminium frames he has become accustomed to racing during nearly his entire pro career).

Now, Dungey certainly isn't going to bad-mouth his brand-new bike to the press. That's to be expected. But I hit him with some pretty tough questions and he did a good job of answering them. KTM literally has never gotten a single podium finish in the big-bike class in AMA Supercross, for example. Obviously, KTM and Ryan Dungey both believe that is a streak that will come to an end in 2012. But it had to be asked how a guy of Dungey's calibre could sign up for the challenge.

His answer? Basically, he trusts Roger De Coster, and De Coster made a lot of promises about the bike, the team, the support, and the capabilities of everything therein.

As for delivering on those promises, all we can do is wait until Anaheim 1 because Dungey has decided he isn't ready for the Monster Energy Cup. That's somewhat to be expected but he and his team have a full three months to get ready for Anaheim 1. Dungey is a proven commodity, and the bike – at least in the AMA – isn't. It's a brave thing that KTM is putting its money where its mouth is, but if they're successful with Dungey it will prove that the KTM can be competitive in supercross. However, if they aren't successful with Dungey, no one is going to blame Dungey.



BACKPAGE







'On-track Off-road' is a free, bi-weekly publication for the screen focused on bringing the latest perspectives on events, blogs and some of the very finest photography from the three worlds of the FIM Motocross World Championship, the AMA Motocross and Supercross series' and MotoGP. 'On-track Off-road' will be published online at www.ontrackoffroad.com every other Tuesday. To receive an email notification that a new issue available with a brief description of each edition's contents simply enter an address in the box provided on the homepage. All email addresses will be kept strictly confidential and only used for purposes connected with OTOR.

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